

INTERAGENCY HELICOPTER OPERATIONS GUIDE
Chapter 10 - Personnel Transport

CHAPTER 10: PERSONNEL TRANSPORT.

- I. **Introduction.** The safe transport of personnel in helicopters is of the highest priority. Utilizing standard procedures for transport outlined in this chapter will ensure, to the extent possible, that agencies meet their objective of transporting personnel safely and efficiently.

In order for personnel to be transported legally in a government aircraft¹, each passenger must meet the definition of authorized passenger. To minimize exposure, all passengers should also be essential to the mission. See the glossary for definitions of authorized and essential passengers.

Refer also to the glossary for definitions of flight crew member, air crew member, and passenger. Air crew members may be permitted on board aircraft during certain missions (for example, external loads) on which passengers are prohibited.

- A. **Authorized Passengers.** Passengers may be transported in government aircraft only if they meet definition of an official passenger (see glossary).
- B. **Unauthorized Passengers.** Passengers who do not meet the definition of an authorized passenger may not be transported aboard government aircraft.
- C. **Essential Passengers.** The Helicopter Manager or Project Flight Manager is responsible for ensuring that only passengers essential to the accomplishment of the mission, including trainees, are on board the aircraft. This is especially critical for missions in the special use flight environment. The local unit Aviation Manager should be contacted if there is any question as to the status of a passenger.
- D. **Carriage Of Government Employees Aboard Restricted Category Helicopters.** Government employees may not be passengers or air crew members aboard restricted category helicopters (this includes helicopters permanently designated as "limited use"). (See Section I.E for policy on news media aboard restricted category aircraft.)
- E. **OMB Circular A-126 Requirements.** OMB Circular A-126 establishes approval and reporting requirements for both point-to-point administrative travel cost-comparisons and mission flights involving Senior Federal Officials. Refer to Chapter 3 for additional information, and to agency-specific directives for guidance. The local unit Aviation Manager is usually responsible for meeting these requirements. State and local agencies may have similar direction.

¹ Government aircraft are defined as those owned, bailed, loaned, leased or lease/purchased, rented, chartered, or contracted by a government agency.

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- F. **News Media As Passengers.** Agency officials may authorize members of accredited news organizations to fly in government aircraft subject to the following requirements:
1. **General.** A qualified Helicopter Manager or Project Flight Manager shall be assigned to the mission. All requirements regarding use of protective equipment, flight following, load calculations, and hazard analysis shall be followed.
 2. **Project Missions.** If the mission is special use, an Aviation Safety Plan shall be required and approved by line management prior to the flight. It must show that the carriage of news media aboard the aircraft is of an official nature and is advantageous to the agency. Since news media are thereby designated official passengers, no flight release waiver is necessary.
 3. **Incident Missions.** As a general rule, the Incident Commander on Type I or II Incident Management Teams may authorize all flights with media on board. On local unit fires, the line manager or his/her designee is usually the approving authority. Flights on government aircraft with news media aboard must be in the interest of the government. No flight release waiver is required. This general guidance may be further restricted by agency local unit policy. The air operations staff should check with the local area to ascertain any additional restrictions or necessary approvals.
 4. **Restricted Category Helicopters.** Carriage of news media aboard restricted category aircraft is specifically prohibited unless authorized at the State, Area, or Regional level on a case-by-case basis.
- II. **Qualified Personnel.** Helicopter and helibase management personnel must be qualified to supervise and coordinate passenger transport activities on incidents or projects per the requirements in Chapter II.
- III. **Load Calculations And Manifesting.** During passenger transport operations, load calculations shall be performed prior to any flight activity in accordance with procedures outlined in Chapter 7 and Appendix A. Personnel manifesting procedures are addressed later in this chapter.
- IV. **Air Crew Member on Board During External Load Missions.** As a general rule, only the Pilot(s) shall be aboard helicopters when conducting external load operations.

However, FAR 133 authorizes an aircrew member to be aboard the aircraft when conducting external load operations. As an exception to the general rule stated above, an aircrew member may be aboard the aircraft to enhance mission accomplishment as authorized by FAR 133 when the following general situations are met:

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- When the safety of a mission can be substantially enhanced, and,
- The capability of the helicopter is not significantly reduced, and,
- The helicopter is not in the restricted category.

Missions where safety and/or effectiveness may be enhanced by an aircrew member being on board during the conduct of external load missions include, but are not limited to:

- Conditions of visibility (smoke, smog) and/or terrain where the Pilot requests an observer aboard to optimize detection of obstacles and other aircraft;
- Complexity of the incident or project and the cockpit workload, to include large numbers of aircraft operating in the vicinity, close and frequent coordination needed with ground personnel, overloaded radio frequencies, etc.
- Areas of airspace complexity (military training areas such as Special-Use Airspace or Military Training Routes; high-density civil operations) where the observer can enhance the ability to avoid collisions with other aircraft.

The Pilot has the final authority regarding carrying an aircrew member during external load operations. Air operations staff should conduct an on-site risk analysis which addresses the benefits of increased safety and efficiency versus the added exposure. The mission(s) must also be adequately planned.

Individual agency exemptions granted by the FAA to FAR 91.119, Minimum Safe Altitudes, may also require an observer on board during specified situations. Consult the Interagency Airspace Coordination Guide.

- V. **Procedures For Transporting Personnel At Helibases or Helispots.** At project or incident helibases and helispots, large numbers of personnel are often moved via helicopter(s). When preparing for transport of personnel, the following guidelines apply.

A. **Arrival of Personnel at the Helibase or Helispot.**

- The person in charge of any group of people needing helicopter transportation (for example, Crew Supervisor, Strike Team Leader, Chief-of-Party) should report to the person in charge of the helibase or helispot.
- The person in charge should give the Helicopter Manager, Project Flight Manager, or Loadmaster a list of the people to be transported so that a manifest can be completed. Passengers should be appropriately clothed (PPE) and ready for transportation.

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The manifester will need:

- Full name of each person being transported;
 - Weight of each person with personal gear;
 - Weight of additional tools and equipment;
 - Destination of personnel and/or cargo.
- The person in charge should maintain control of personnel at all times.

- B. **Manifesting Personnel.** The manifesting process tracks personnel being transported and ensures that allowable payload limitations are not exceeded. Consult Appendix A for instructions on completion of Form HCM-9, Interagency Helicopter Passenger/Cargo Manifest.



NOTE Form HCM-10, Handcrew Passenger/Cargo Helicopter Manifest, allows rapid, efficient manifesting of handcrews from pre-completed manifests carried by the Crew Superintendent. If handcrews provide an accurate manifest, it is not necessary to transfer names to the Interagency Helicopter Passenger/Cargo manifest. Form HCM-10, Handcrew Passenger/Cargo Helicopter Manifest, has been specifically designed for this purpose. Refer to Appendix A for additional information.



NOTE Weights must be actual, not estimated. If scales are available, utilize them. Note also that scales are required at incident or project helibases; if possible, provide scales at helispots.

- C. **Other Considerations.** At this time, also consider:
- Pilot's knowledge of helispot location, hazards, etc. On helibases, the use of Form HBM-2, Helispot Information Summary, to provide a briefing is required (see Appendix B for specific instructions);
 - Method of handling and transporting tools, equipment, and supplies (external or internal, hazardous materials requirements, etc.);
 - Emergency procedures to be followed;
 - Stops to be made en route;

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- Procedures for unloading personnel and/or cargo at destination, with the assurance that:

- The destination is staffed by trained personnel, or,
- An air or flight crew member is assigned to the flight to assist, or,
- One of the passengers is qualified to assist.

- D. **Passenger Safety Briefings.** Once manifesting has been completed, then the safety briefing can be accomplished. Briefings shall be given to every passenger prior to entering the safety circle to board the helicopter. This briefing should follow the format shown in the Aircraft Safety Briefing (see Exhibits 10-1 and 10-2) at the end of this chapter and as discussed in Appendix A.

The safety briefing may be given by the Pilot or as delegated by the Pilot to authorized and qualified personnel (that is, the Helicopter Manager, the Project Flight Manager, or Loadmaster).

- Ensure that instructions are clear and understood.
- Ensure in-flight emergency procedures briefing is included.

- E. **Loading Procedures after Safety Briefing.** After the safety briefing has been given, consider the following:

- Helicopter Crewmembers or other authorized, trained personnel people shall assist in loading operations;



- Personal items carried on board must be adequately secured;
- Prior to approaching the helicopter, remove canteen belts, vests with full pouches, fire shelters, and other items which might impede proper fastening of seatbelts/shoulder harnesses; these items must be placed and secured in an appropriate area;
- Stay in safe area prescribed by helicopter crew or other authorized personnel until given the direction to load;
- Wear appropriate head protection as referenced in Chart 9-1;
- First person into the helicopter passenger compartment should move to center seat, or seat assigned by Pilot or helicopter crew personnel;

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- Find seat belt and fasten; if unable, advise the helicopter crewperson who will assist;
- Ensure that personal protective equipment is properly worn (that is, sleeves rolled down and collars up); see Chapter 9, Charts 9-1 and 9-2, for PPE requirements
- Large gear such as fire tools should be handled by helicopter crewperson;
- Ensure that all personnel understand the instructions given by Pilot or Manager.



CAUTION: When opening hinged doors (not on sliding tracks) to embark/disembark passengers, keep one hand on the door at all times until the door is securely re-latched.

F. In-Flight Precautions.

- No smoking during flight;
- Keep clear of controls; DO NOT TOUCH controls, except in an emergency where, if the Pilot is incapacitated, a passenger may shut down the fuel and electrical supply);



- Secure all items, especially when flying with the door(s) off;
- Be aware of emergency exits and read instructions pertaining to emergency egress; if in doubt, ask questions.

G. Unloading Procedures.

- Wait for Pilot, helicopter crew member, or other authorized personnel to give clear signal for offloading;
- Doors should be opened only by helicopter crew members, other authorized personnel, or at direction of Pilot when no one is available at the landing site;
- Remove seat belts and lay them on the seat; if possible, refasten and lay on seat;

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CAUTION: Ensure that seat belts are inside the aircraft when closing doors. A loose seat belt can cause several thousand dollars of damage when the helicopter becomes airborne.



- Maintain tight control of all personal items.
- Exit the helicopter slowly and use the departure route indicated by helicopter crew personnel or the Pilot; when large numbers of passengers are being transported, helicopter personnel will normally accompany passengers from aircraft to the safety zone;



CAUTION: When exiting the aircraft, do not walk toward the tail rotor or uphill. If in doubt, ask the Pilot or other Crew members on the approved exit route.

- After leaving the helicopter, move to an area which is not underneath the helicopter's departure flight path.

VI. **Personnel Transport Using Military Helicopters.**

- A. **Incident Operations.** All military helicopters should be staffed with a Military Helicopter Manager (see Chapter II), who functions as a member of a joint military/civilian flight crew. The Military Helicopter Manager will assist the military Crew Chief in loading and unloading passengers and cargo, conducting passenger briefings, manifesting passengers, and ensuring the use of required PPE.
- B. **Project Operations.** It is recommended that an agency Helicopter Manager be assigned to any military helicopter assigned to a project. Duties and responsibilities are the same as those for incident operations.

VII. **Special Law Enforcement Operations.** See Chapter 16 for differences in passenger transport procedures on special law enforcement missions. Unless specifically authorized in Chapter 16, law enforcement missions shall adhere to the procedures outlined in this chapter.

VIII. **Special Search and Rescue Operations.** See Chapter 17 for differences in passenger transport procedures on search and rescue missions. Unless specifically authorized in Chapter 17, search and rescue missions shall adhere to the procedures outlined in this chapter.

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Exhibit 10-2: Standard Aircraft Safety Briefing Checklist (FRONT)

AIRCRAFT SAFETY BRIEFING (FRONT)

It is recommended that passengers be briefed in groups rather than individually.

MANAGER BRIEFING TO PILOT AND PASSENGERS GENERAL-

1. **Pilot Card:** Qualified and current for aircraft type and mission.
2. **Aircraft Card:** Aircraft Approved for mission?
3. **Flight Plan/Resource Tracking:** FAA or Agency Flight plan filed; Resource Tracking procedures identified.
4. **Flight Following/Radio Equipment:** Flight following procedures in place; radio equipment is adequate and operational.
5. **Nature of Mission:** Pilot briefed on nature and sequence of mission.
6. **Analysis of Known Hazards:** Known hazards discussed; high-level recon prior to descent to low-level.
7. **PIC Concept:** Pilot shall not be pressured into performing missions beyond pilot's capability or that of the aircraft.
8. **Hazardous Materials:** Identify any Hazardous Materials that will be transported and notify the Pilot. Take appropriate actions.

PILOT OR MANAGER BRIEFING TO PASSENGERS

1. **Personal Protective Equipment:*** Appropriate head protection (see Chart 9-1); Nomex clothing; ear and eye protection; boots; other survival equipment as applicable (PFD, life rafts, etc.)
2. **Approach and departure paths:**
 - When landing in helicopters in uneven terrain, always approach and depart from the downslope (lower) side
 - Approach and depart helicopter in a crouch position
 - Keep in pilot's field of vision at all times
 - Stay clear of the landing area when helicopters are landing or departing
 - Never go near the tail of helicopters; do not approach airplanes from the front
3. **Tools and Equipment:**
 - Secure hand tools and equipment awaiting transport (will not blow into rotor system)
 - Carry tools or other long objects parallel to the ground, not over the shoulder into the air
 - Make assignments for carrying tools/equipment to and from the helicopter or airplane

*PPE required for special use airplane missions and all helicopter flights. Available and worn by all passengers, pilot(s), and aircrew members.

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Exhibit 10-2: Standard Aircraft Safety Briefing Checklist (FRONT)

PILOT OR MANAGER BRIEFING TO PASSENGERS (CONT)

4. Seating in Aircraft:

- No movement between seats unless authorized by pilot
- Seat belt fastened at all times
- Unbuckle only when specifically directed to do so by pilot or helicopter loading/unloading personnel
- Follow the instructions of pilot
- Know location of first aid kit, survival kit, fire extinguisher, ELT (Emergency Locator Transmitter), fuel shutoff switch, radio operation, oxygen (if available)

5. Security of Equipment:

- Loose items secured and manageable; all baggage secured in aircraft or in compartment
- Never throw any object from a helicopter or airplane
- Around helicopters, never reach up or dart after a hat or other object that has become unsecured

6. Smoking: Rules in and around aircraft

7. Emergency Exits: Location and use

HELICOPTER IN-FLIGHT EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

- Follow instructions of pilot/helicopter personnel
- Fasten seat belt and shoulder harness; secure gear
- Appropriate head protection properly worn
- Forward facing passengers restrained with shoulder harnesses, sit in full upright position with head and back against seat and arms folded across chest
- Forward facing passengers without shoulder harness: bend forward at waist, grasp arms under legs and place head between knees
- Aft (rearward) facing passengers, sit in full upright position with head and back against seat
- Side facing passengers, bend forward at waist, grasp arms under legs and place head between knees
- Assist any injured person who cannot leave the aircraft
- Move clear of the aircraft only after rotor blades stop or when instructed to do so by the pilot or helicopter crew
- Assess situation, follow pilot/helicopter manager instructions, render first aid, pilot and/or helicopter manager to remove first aid kit, radio, ELT, and fire extinguisher.